

## MY COVID 19 DIARY 2020

COVID 19    **co**=corona    **vi**=virus    **d**=disease    **2019**=year it started

During 2019 Australian museums had been remembering the Spanish Influenza pandemic which began in 1919 and killed 15,000 Australians. It's amazing to think that exactly 100 years later we have another worldwide pandemic!

### February

Early February the Historical Society had a highly successful Cavalcade of Fashion event, even though Sydney had drenching rain fall all that day. Mid-month David and I had taken a very pleasant long weekend driving trip to the Yarra Valley for a wine tasting dinner in aid of the Humpty Dumpty Foundation. Nothing seemed to be wrong with the world.

Suddenly there were stories about a serious illness coming from China. Tinned and packaged foods began to disappear from the supermarket shelves, as people began to stock up. Toilet and kitchen paper as well as sanitising products vanished rapidly. We were supposed to have a jazz event at Carisbrook in early March but were unable to buy the items needed for the Creole food, so this had to be (at first) postponed. Later of course it was cancelled. Our Historical Society general meeting for February went ahead as usual, as did other meetings.

At the end of February we went with a group of friends to the Lyric Theatre to see "Billy Elliot" I wondered why so many of the seats were empty – I think people were starting to worry about this disease.

### March

At the beginning of the month our individual sports and leisure activities continued as usual. David flew to Brisbane for 2 days for business, and to celebrate two family birthdays we went for a celebratory lunch at a local restaurant. Early in March we attended a fund-raising lunch for the Humpty Dumpty Foundation at a large hotel, and suddenly there were hand sanitising stations to be used on entry.

Our daughter, who works in the Queensland hospital system as a Social Worker, rang saying how worried the Doctors were about the disease, wondering just how they would cope with the possible numbers who could be infected and how few ventilators Australia had available. There was a possibility that doctors would have to make decisions about who they would try to save in some cases, probably not older people! Even the Social Workers had been told they could be on the front line if the hospital system became overloaded! She burst into tears saying that grandparents should stay away from their grandchildren, as children were carriers but didn't show symptoms, and of course was insistent that we should not be going out for any reason.

My calligraphy lessons were still continuing at this stage. We each had a large trestle table to work on so were not close to each other, however I had promised my daughter that I would wipe down all the desks and chairs with antiseptic before we started. By the following week (which would have been the final one for the term) all lessons were cancelled.

Staying away from other people was suggested as the best way to stay safe. Even fresh food now became scarce as people began to cook up dishes which could be frozen for the future. Two weeks before the end of term 1 the Government decided to close all schools, saying students would do their lessons online at home. Only those whose parents were in necessary occupations such as hospital staff continued at school. We began to have 'face time' calls with our grandchildren as they ate their lunch. As several of our members were medically compromised it was decided to cancel all the Historical Society's meetings.

'Social Distancing' had become the normal way of life - staying one and a half metres from others. It became interesting at the bowling club sitting around tables with distance! On 21<sup>st</sup> March the Government closed all non-essential services and social gatherings. Everyone was asked to work from home. Of course, this, together with home schooling, made life very difficult for many families. Restaurants could only open for take away. We made an effort at least once a week to order take away

from our favourite Lane Cove restaurants in the hope that the support would mean they would be able to continue when everything was over. Many restaurants also started selling specialised groceries and wine – things they would normally have used in their dishes. This of course was also helping out their suppliers. Many top suppliers also began to sell to the public as their customers both local and overseas disappeared. Our son purchased meat and seafood from a friend whose business was usually to send Australian produce overseas and shared with us. I must admit the steak was some of the best I have ever eaten.

Supermarkets remained open, but many shelves stayed empty or were emptied as soon as they were restocked. Special early opening times were used just for older shoppers. Entry and exit lanes were formed to keep people distanced both on entry and inside the shop. Limits were placed on items which were being hoarded. Streets set up groups who would do the shopping for older people who could not go out, as did the Council.

Some friends who had been in the USA managed to get a flight home, but now had to self-isolate for 2 weeks. We offered to do some shopping for them & leave it at their front door, an offer they accepted. 2 days later both were extremely sick, with 1 being admitted to intensive care – very scary.

A week later on 29 March a limit of 2 people was placed on a gathering, with people told to stay home. Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia had closed their borders, making it very difficult for people who worked over the border.

## **April**

By April 2 it was announced that the Police would be checking that people were doing the right thing & staying home unless they had a specific reason for being out. The Police suggested that the restrictions would be in place for 90 days (3 months) so we await the end of June to see if we are out of our 'bubble' as the 'iso' (isolation) is being called. Numbers with the disease seem to be slowing but I think it will be a long time before any normal society begins again.

Lane Cove had several ideas going for children being taken on walks in the fresh air as all playgrounds had been closed as had the plaza. People put bears & other stuffed toys in their windows for children to spy as in the book "We're going on a Bear Hunt". As well rainbows were drawn & displayed in windows. There were many jokes around with young adults telling their parents they had to stay home & getting upset if parents went out – a reversal to the norm!

We felt quite 'naughty' one day. We are getting a covering put on the deck area & needed to see the actual system, so we went to Brookvale to the supplier's offices. As well my phone had decided to die so we went to Chatswood on the way home to buy a new one. It was really weird in Westfields with most shops closed & very few people around. It was like a ghost town.

Easter (April 10 to 13) was extremely strange. Many people usually go away for this holiday but this year everyone was almost forced to stay home. Police patrolled the roads asking people why they were travelling, with a \$1000 fine if they felt the journey was not necessary. There was very little traffic on the roads and everything was noticeably quiet.

My yoga teacher put some classes online so that helped a bit with exercise. David usually gets the paper each day so the special COVID activities pages also helped to fill in the time. I continued to go to Carisbrook on Mondays, & David was still doing the weekly gardening at the Bowling Club. Getting out & seeing someone else (with distancing) helped a little to keep you sane.

As all gatherings were illegal the Anzac Day commemorations on 25 April were banned. At 6:30am people gathered at their front gates with candles, and those who could play an instrument played the Last Post in the street. The council put their formalities on line.

At the end of the holidays school returns did not happen, with schooling at home via computer continuing as earlier. David decided his hair needed a trim so it was my turn with the scissors! Just

a trim off the bottom was fine, thinning the back was a little trickier using the razor so there were a few lumps taken out I fear. He has been cutting the top himself – I don't think I'm trusted!

## **May**

On the weekend of May 2/3 the restrictions were lifted a little, with people allowed to have 2 visitors (& their children). Friends invited us for dinner on Saturday night – very exciting! We also had Chris & family over on the Sunday with take away. David cooked a special dinner for our 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary on the 4th. Very nice but not quite as good as going out somewhere special.

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> term my calligraphy classes have begun again, but this term using 'zoom', an online conference programme. I don't think it's really satisfactory for a practical lesson, but it sort of works. We have also had some business calls using this method. Visitor numbers have slowly been increased to 5, but the social distancing is still most important.

Restaurants have been allowed to reopen, but only for 10 customers at a time & they must be seated. There must be 4 sq. metres per person available, so some small places may not even be able to serve 10.

Public transport has continued to run throughout, but now there are limits on the number of passengers with less than 50% the usual, so many people are continuing to work from home rather than travel to their offices. Schools returned on May 11, but many parents take their children to & from school rather than let them use public transport.

## **June**

Beginning of June and the clubs and restaurants have been allowed to reopen with limited numbers and much distancing – again numbers dependent on the 4 sq. metre per person rule & everyone must be seated. The bowling club has only roll ups though, no actual games yet, and only using every second rink with only 1 person per group of 4 players allowed to touch the mat & jack. It has been nice to socialise with other people though.

Mid June and there have been large demonstrations in the city so it will be interesting to see if that causes a 'second wave' to occur. NSW has not had any local transmission for 2 weeks.

We have been incredibly lucky in Australia compared to most other countries around the world, but we wonder if social distancing will ever disappear, or if the medical community will ever find a vaccine. Will it be possible to give friends a hug, or to shake hands again? Can the government cope with the recession that is now occurring? So many changes to society have occurred due to a microscopic virus.